



**BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST**

An older child and young person's guide to Foster Care.



April 2018.

Hello.

By the time you read this guide, a Social Worker should have spoken to you about why we think you need to leave your family and live with a Foster Carer.

We understand that this may be a scary and unsettling time for you and you may be angry at the decisions that are being made for you. We have had to make this difficult decision to make sure that you are safe and not at any further risk.

You may be in foster care for only a short time but we will need to make sure that it is safe for you to return home, before this will happen.

In this booklet, there is information to some of the questions that you may have.

If you have any more questions, you can ask your Foster Carer and they will make sure that your Social Worker is contacted about this. You should also have been given the contact details for your Social Worker.

Why am I in foster care?

There are many reasons why children and young people need to be looked after by Foster Carers.

You can talk to your Social Worker about your own situation as well as your Carer. The important thing to remember is that you are in foster care for your own well-being.

How long will I be in foster care?

There is no one simple answer to this.

It will depend on why you are being looked after, how long your Foster Carers are able to look after you and what the plans are for the future. You may stay with foster cares for a few days or months, or for years until you are able to look after yourself.

What happens when I am old enough to look after myself?

When you are in foster care we will help you to prepare for adult life. When you are close to your 16th birthday your Social Worker will need to make an assessment on your self-care skills.

Some young people stay with their Foster Carers passed their 18th birthday and others, will move to other types of accommodation. For some young people in Foster Care, they may wish to go to University. If you are eligible to do so, we will also help you with this.

What happens if I am unhappy?

Your Social Worker and your Foster Carers are there to help you so if you are at all worried or want to know what is happening about your future you should talk to them and let me know how you feel.

If something is still bothering you then you can also contact:

Children's Rights and Participation Service Birmingham, which will help by providing someone to listen to you and talk for you if necessary. Their number is 303 7217.

What is fostering?

Wherever possible children and young people who cannot live at home will be offered the opportunity to live with foster carers.

Some may be placed with foster families who they have not met until now; some may be placed with family members.

Birmingham looks after a lot of children and young people and so has different types of foster carers to provide placements for them.

What will my Foster Carer do for me?

Your Foster Carers want you to be happy living in their family. They will ask you about what you like and dislike. They will help you do the best you can at school, make sure you have the right medical and dental treatment, and help you with any social activities you want to get involved in.

Your Foster Carers will help you follow your religion and culture. They will support you in any contact you have with people who are important to you.

They will also be there to help you with any problems you may have and to help you sort them out – they are there to assist you.

Will I be safe living with Foster Carers?

Yes, Foster Carers and their families have been carefully chosen. They have been checked by the police. Their home and any pets have been checked for safety.

The carers have been trained and will be supervised by a worker from the Fostering Service.

Will I have to go to school?

You will be expected to go to school because we think education is very important. Your Foster Carer will help you with homework and ensure you have somewhere quiet to do it.

If you don't have a school or other education placement, your Social Worker will arrange an alternative school or provision as soon as possible.

Will I get pocket money?

Yes, the amount depends upon your age. We may need to make sure that you are spending your pocket money appropriately.

Can I see my family and friends?

You may be able to see your family and friends, but this is not always possible. In some cases, seeing a person you used to see might be unsafe for you or cause you harm. If so, you may be stopped from speaking to them or seeing them, or may not be able to see them on your own.

Your Social Worker will talk to you about this so you know what is happening, and explain why it is in your best interests.

Will I be asked for my views?

Yes, your views are important. You will be asked your views and opinions at the time of your review. Your Social Worker will explain to you what this is about and how you can make sure you say what is important to you.

But you do not have to wait until your review to express your feelings – you can talk to your carer, Social Worker or anyone you trust.

What rules will there be?

This will depend on your age and your particular circumstances. There is a term called 'Delegated Authority' which means that you,

your Social Worker and parents agree to what you can and cannot do when you live with a Foster Carer.

There will be specific times given to you when you will be expected to be back at your foster home. If you do not return to your foster home, your Foster Carer will need to report this; so we can see what we may need to do to support you.

You may be able to stay overnight with friends and other family members but we will need to ensure that this is both a safe and positive experience for you.

There are certain behaviours that we will have to challenge if any young person displays them. This would include smoking, taking drugs, drinking alcohol, swearing, racist language, bullying, stealing and violence. This is so that you, your Foster Carer and any other children in the foster home are safe and not scared.

Will I have to go to a meeting?

You will be invited to meetings to make sure you are being well cared for and that your foster home is still the right place for you to live. You may not want to go to this meeting but an adult called an Independent Reviewing Officer or IRO will make sure that they know how you are feeling before this meeting.

What can I expect from my Foster Carer and Social Worker?

We've written a list of 10 promises (the Birmingham Pledge) of what we'll do to make sure that happens. Our promises are based on what children have told us is most important to them:

Promise 1: we'll involve you in decisions that affect you and listen to your views.

Promise 2: we'll try really hard to find the best possible place for you to live.

Promise 3: we'll make sure that you have every opportunity possible to do well at school.

Promise 4: we'll support you to do the things you enjoy and encourage you to take part in a wide range of activities, so that your talents, hobbies and interests are met.

Promise 5: we'll take care of your health and encourage you to be healthy.

Promise 6: we'll give you a good and clear assessment of your needs and an up-to-date care plan.

Promise 7: we'll make sure you have your own social worker, who visits you regularly and gives you details about how to contact them (or someone else if they're away) when you need them.

Promise 8: we'll help you stay in touch with your family, friends and anyone else who's important to you.

Promise 9: we'll listen to what you have to say.

Promise 10: we'll work with you and give you all the help and support you need to move successfully from care to adult life.



Important contacts

Ofsted

Tel: 0300 123 1231

Web: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Post: Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

Childline

Tel: 0800 11 11 (free 24 hours)

Web: www.childline.org.uk

Childline is a counselling service for all children and young people. You can contact them about anything. No problem is too big or too small.

Rights 4 Me

Tel: 0800 528 0731

Web: www.rights4me.org

This is the website for the Children's Rights Director for England. It's the place to visit if you want to find out about your rights, or ways to get your voice heard.

Voice

Tel: 0808 800 5792

Web: www.voiceyp.org

Voice offers advocacy to children in care, making sure that they are listened to.

Birmingham Children's Trust Fostering Agency

Ask to speak to a Fostering Support Manager

Tel: 0121 303 5313

Address: 3rd Floor, 1 Lancaster Circus, Birmingham B2 2WX

Birmingham Children's Rights and Participation Service

Tel: 0121 303 7217

Address: The Lighthouse, 100 Alma Way, Birmingham, B19 2LN